

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ARA-16 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20

USIA-15 MC-02 ACDA-19 IGA-02 AID-20 OMB-01 TRSE-00

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FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9579

INFO DOD WASHDC

USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, MASS, UK, CI

SUBJECT: LEFT-WING MP'S OBJECT TO ARMS SALES TO CHILE

REF: LONDON 4556

1. A MINOR ROW HAS DEVELOPED OVER THE LABOR GOVERNMENT'S POLICY TOWARDS CHILE WHEN ERIC HEFFER (MINISTER OF STATE FOR INDUSTRY) MADE A SPEECH OVER THE WEEKEND CRITICAL OF FOREIGN SECRETARY CALLAGHAN'S ANNOUNCEMENT (REF) THAT HMG INTENDED TO ALLOW THE COMPLETION OF THE BRITISH CONTRACT TO DELIVER TWO FRIGATES AND TWO SUBMARINES TO CHILE. HEFFER REPORTEDLY SAID, AFTER STRONGLY CONDEMNING THE CHILEAN REGIME, THAT THERE WAS "WIDESPREAD DISQUIET" IN THE PARTY, AND "IT IS MY VIEW THAT WE SHOULD NEVER SAY ONE THING IN OPPOSITION AND DO SOMETHING ELSE WHEN WE ARE IN GOVERNMENT."

2. HEFFER'S SPEECH WAS REPORTEDLY SHOWN TO PM WILSON AND CALLAGHAN BEFORE BEING DELIVERED. BOTH APPARENTLY
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TOLD HIM NOT TO MENTION THE MATTER OF THE DELIVERY OF

WARSHIPS. WILSON REPORTEDLY HAS PLANS TO SEE HEFFER ABOUT THIS MATTER ON APRIL 18. IN RESPONSE TO PRESS QUERIES, CALLAGHAN HAS SAID THAT HE HOPED HEFFER WOULD BE REPRIMANDED RATHER THAN SACKED FOR HIS BREACH OF CUSTOMARY MINISTERIAL BEHAVIOR. THE PARTY'S NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE WILL REPORTEDLY MEET ON APRIL 17 TO DISCUSS A RESOLUTION CONDEMNING COMPLETION OF THE ARMS SALES CONTRACT.

3. COMMENT. HEFFER IS WELL KNOWN FOR HIS LEFT-WING VIEWS AS WELL AS FOR BEING SOMETHING OF A POLITICAL MAVERICK. IT HAS BEEN NO SURPRISE THAT THE GOVERNMENT DECISION TO COMPLETE THE CONTRACT TO DELIVER WARSHIPS TO CHILE WAS UNPOPULAR EITHER WITH HIM OR OTHER LEFT-WING LABOR MP'S. NEVERTHELESS, HEFFER'S REMARKS UNDOUBTEDLY ARE SOMETHING OF AN EMBARRASSMENT TO THE GOVERNMENT WHICH WILL WISH BOTH TO PLAY DOWN THE LEFT-WING CHALLENGE TO ITS POLICY AND TO AVOID ANY SERIOUS POLITICAL REPERCUSSIONS.

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Message Attributes

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